

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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-----221248Z 043464 /46

R 202227Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7338

UNCLAS CARACAS 3940

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PFOR, VE, US  
SUBJ: REACTION OF VENEZUELAN LEADERS TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S  
OAS SPEECH

REF: CARACAS 3789

1. FURTHER REACTION OVER THE WEEKEND BY VENEZUELAN LEADERS TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S OAS SPEECH APRIL 14 HAS BEEN LESS EUPHORIC AND SOMEWHAT MORE QUALIFIED THAN THE INITIAL REACTION REPORTED IN REF. WHILE RESPONDING FAVORABLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S PROMISES OF A NEW ORIENTATION IN U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS, POLITICAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE COMMENTED THAT LATIN AMERICA SHOULD WAIT AND SEE IF THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSALS ARE TRANSLATED INTO CONCRETE ACTS.

2. GONZALO BARRIOS, PRESIDENT OF THE VENEZUELAN CONGRESS AND THE RULING ACCION DEMOCRATICA (AD) PARTY, SAID THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENTS INDICATE THAT A "POSITIVE OUTLOOK" EXISTS FOR U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS. BARRIOS OBSERVED THAT CARTER HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT HE IS "CONCERNED NOT ONLY WITH A GENERAL POLITY, BUT ALSO WITH THE NORMAL ASPECTS OF THESE POLICIES."

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AD SENATOR LUIS AGUSTO DUBUC, A FORMER MINISTER OF INTERNAL RELATIONS, WAS ONE OF THOSE CALLING FOR A WAIT AND SEE ATTITUDE. AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE SORT OF DEEDS EXPECTED OF THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION, DUBUC LISTED THE MODIFICATION OF THE GSP EXCLUSION CLAUSE IN THE U.S. TRADE LAW.

3. DEPUTY EDUARDO FERNANDEZ, CONGRESSIONAL LEADER OF THE

OPPOSITION COPEI PARTY, DESCRIBED PRESIDENT CARTER'S PANAMA CANAL PROPOSALS AND HIS INTENTION TO PARTICULARIZE RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES AS AN "INTERESTING OPENING IN U.S. POLICY." WHILE DESCRIBING THE PRESIDENT'S DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS "FRANKLY POSITIVE", FERNANDEZ REFERRED TO THE NECESSITY OF ESTABLISHING MECHANISMS TO ENSURE "FAIRER TRADE TERMS" TO STIMULATE AND FINANCE LATIN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.

4. DEPUTY TEODORO PETKOFF, CONGRESSIONAL LEADER OF THE MARXIST MAS PARTY, COMMENTED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO WAIT FOR RESULTS BECAUSE VERY OFTEN "NOBLE WORDS AND CONCEPTS HAVE BEEN MASKS FOR AN INTERVENTIONIST POLICY WHICH BELIES ITS PREVIOUS STATEMENTS." "WHERE U.S. POLICY IS CONCERNED." HE ADDED, "IT IS ALWAYS MORE IMPORTANT TO LOOK AT THE HANDS RATHER THAN THE MOUTHS OF U.S. CHIEFS OF STATE."

5. OTHER OPPOSITION LEADERS ALSO CALLED FOR GREATER ATTENTION TO THE ECONOMIC SIDE OF U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS. MEP DEPUTY SIUBERTO MARTINEZ ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOME U.S. SECTORS, "ESPECIALLY THE DEMOCRATS", HAD MADE SINCERE EFFORTS TO REORIENT U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS, BUT HE REMAINED SOMEWHAT PESSIMISTIC. MORE IMPORTANT THAT A CHANGE IN POLICY WOULD BE A CHANGE IN THE RULES OF THE GAME AS FAR AS SOCIO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS ARE CONCERNED, MARTINEZ COMMENTED. URD SENATOR RAMON TENORIO SIFONTES CHARACTERIZED AS "ESPECIALLY POSITIVE" PRESIDENT CARTER'S SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, INTEREST IN CLOSER RELATIONS WITH DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS, DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE A NEW PANAMA CANAL TREATY, AND OPENNESS WITH REGARD TO THE POSSIBILITY OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA. HOWEVER, HE CALLED

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CARTER'S SILENCE ON A REVISION OF THE TRADE LAW "WORRISMOE".

6. BUSINESS CIRCLES ALSO REACTED FAVORABLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. ANTONIO JOSE DIAZ MARTINEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (FEDECAMARAS), COMMENTED THAT BUSINESSMEN VIEWED CARTER'S SPEECH AS "QUITE POSITIVE." HE ADDED THAT THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT "WE ARE REALLY AT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW U.S. POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA." PRO-VENEZUELA, A STATIST BUSINESS GROUP, SAID THE SPEECH HAD OPENED NEW HOPE FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN LATIN AMERICA AND THE U.S. HOWEVER, THE GROUP SAID TI HAD TO VIEW CARTER'S PRONOUNCEMENTS WITH SOME SKEPTICISM BECAUSE OF A FAILURE OF PREVIOUS U.S. ADMINISTRATIONS TO CARRY THROUGH WITH HIGH SOUNDING POLICIES AND THE FACT THAT "POWERFUL FORCES" ARE RANGED AGAINST THE U.S. PRESIDENT.

7. COMMENT: VENEZUELAN LEADERS OF ALL STRIPES REMAIN SENSITIVE TO THE EXCLUSION OF VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR FROM GSP BENEFITS OF THE TRADE LAW. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THEY HAVE FOCUSED

ON THIS OMISSION IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S SPEECH. NEVERTHELESS,  
OVERALL REACTION TO THE SPEECH HAS BEEN POSITIVE.  
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Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009